

# Department of Human Services

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\*Important story at this spot

## Articles in Today's Clips Thursday, November 29, 2007

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Thursday, November 29, 2007

## **Mom hid son's death, state says**

### **Agency's filing details woman's attempts to explain his whereabouts**

**Kim Kozlowski / The Detroit News**

For two years, Nickella Reid told a series of lies to explain the whereabouts of her son Deuntay Miller -- a hushed Chicago adoption, an extended visit to relatives and even denial that she gave birth to him at all. But in July, a call to Child Protective Services about unsanitary living conditions and suspicions about the whereabouts of one of Reid's children led state investigators to ask pointed questions about Deuntay, who was born nearly three years ago. Rather than risk losing her other children, Reid, 24, in August passed off a nephew as Deuntay, whose skeletal remains were still inside the home Reid shared with her boyfriend, Joseph Miller, and their four other children.

She avoided losing her children -- and the discovery that Deuntay had died before his first birthday. The truth wouldn't come to light for another three months, after his 20-month-old brother was hospitalized for burns to over one-third of his body.

"These stories just make me want to scream," said Jeanne Fowler, president of Big Family of Michigan, a child advocacy organization. "This worker had the chance to keep this other boy from being burned by this hot water. He didn't have to suffer this."

The Michigan Department of Human Services on Wednesday filed a petition to terminate the parental rights of Reid, 24, and Miller, 27, who have three other sons ages 4, 3 and 4 months. The boys are in foster care. A preliminary hearing was adjourned until Dec. 5, but the petition offers a glimpse into the disappearance of Deuntay and the events that followed the scalding of his brother, who suffered second- and third-degree burns on his buttocks, back, legs, thighs and shins.

Today, Reid's 20-month-old son is recovering in Children's Hospital and is not expected to be released until mid-December. Reid and Miller are charged with first- and second-degree child abuse in connection with the incident. They are being held in the Wayne County Jail.

The Detroit couple also face charges of welfare fraud because Reid collected food stamps in Deuntay's name for nearly two years, according to court records. She and Miller may face further criminal charges in connection with the death of Deuntay, whose body was partially cremated on a barbecue grill two weeks after he died, Reid told police.

"Family and friends hadn't seen Deuntay in nearly two years, saying Reid told them he was adopted in Chicago.

The Wayne County Department of Human Services received a complaint on July 16 of a dirty home and suspicions of the whereabouts of Deuntay, who had been dead at the time for more than a year.

Reid told the worker she "did not know Deuntay Miller" and she only had given birth to three children -- even though she had bore four sons and was pregnant with a fifth.

The next day, Reid admitted Deuntay was her son, and said he was staying with her sister. She also reported he was in Arkansas with his grandmother.

Reid's home on Lillibridge was assessed by state workers, who reported sparse furnishings and the intense odor of urine. Reid said the basement was backed up and the electrical system was sparking, and the other children were staying with relatives.

Reid was told to show all her children to the worker. When she had not done so 10 days later, the worker made another attempt to reach Reid, but Reid was having her fifth baby at Hutzel Hospital, court records show.

The worker instructed hospital officials not to release the newborn son of Reid and Miller until they produce

their four other children, including Deuntay, and found suitable housing.

A week later, state officials declared the home of Reid's mother to be appropriate and Reid introduced a state worker to four children, including a nephew posing as Deuntay. Believing he was Deuntay, the worker referred Reid and Miller to prevention services to assist with housing and income -- and avoiding further contact with the child welfare system.

The state Department of Human Services does not comment on individual cases, but in general, child protection workers will refer families to protective services when they investigate a home and don't have enough evidence to warrant removal of a child due to abuse or neglect, said Steve Yager, director of the Office of Family Advocate.

On Nov. 11, Reid and Miller's 20-month-old son suffered severe burns, which sparked a new round of suspicion because the parents' explanation was not consistent with the boy's injuries.

Reid first told workers she boiled water to give her son a bath. She emptied it into the tub. When she went to check on her newborn son, the toddler fell into the tub of boiling water.

She later called this story a lie, and said that she was sleeping when Miller gave the boy a bath when he suffered the burns.

Reid did not call 911, nor did she take him to the hospital. Eight hours passed before she called her mother.

"I was trying to figure out what to do," Reid was quoted in court documents.

Reid and Miller took the boy to Reid's mother, and she called their pastor, who is also a psychiatrist.

The pastor told them they had to take the boy to the hospital, but Reid asked what they could do to prevent the child from going to the hospital, court records show.

The pastor, who believes Reid suffers from a severe mental illness, took the couple and the baby to the hospital, otherwise, Reid's mother worried, the child would not get treated.

A criminal investigation into Deuntay's death began Nov. 19, when Reid provided state workers with an Oklahoma phone number that turned out to be Deuntay's paternal grandparents.

She admitted on Nov. 21 that Deuntay had died sometime in February or March 2006 and his body was burned on a barbecue grill two weeks later. The parents kept the remains in their home until the criminal investigation began. Miller moved the body to the basement rafters of a different home, according to court documents, and police recovered them last weekend.

*You can reach Kim Kozlowski at (313) 222-2024 or [kkozlowski@detnews.com](mailto:kkozlowski@detnews.com).*

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## Constantine Police Continue To Search For Child's Killer

POSTED: 4:39 pm EST November 28, 2007  
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Nearly three weeks after an 11-year-old girl's body was found in a cemetery, the police chief said he is confident an arrest will be made in the case.

Jodi Parrack, a fifth-grader at Riverside Elementary School, last was seen alive riding her bicycle in the southwestern Michigan village of Constantine after leaving a friend's house around 4:45 p.m. on Nov. 8, said police Chief Mark Honeysett.

The child's mother, Valerie Carver, reported the girl missing around 7 p.m. after Jodi failed to return home.

Carver was with friends searching for her daughter when they discovered the girl's body in the Constantine Township Cemetery around 10:30 p.m.

Her bike was found nearby.

"We've gotten some tips lately that have been pretty intriguing... and make me more optimistic," the chief told the Kalamazoo Gazette for a story published Wednesday. "I think (the killing) involves someone locally here, so for that reason I'm confident we'll find out who and maybe why. I don't believe it was just someone passing through who picked her out."

A team of 40 to 50 investigators from the FBI and local law enforcement have amassed nearly 450 tips, which they are continuing to prioritize and look into, Honeysett said.

"We're hoping that if anyone saw her after 4:45, they may have seen her with the person who killed her or who was with her when she died," he said. "I still firmly believe that someone in town did see her or has information that they don't think is important and haven't passed it along to us."

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## Odette to undergo forensic exam

*By Michael Jones, Staff Writer*

GENESEE COUNTY — A former Gaylord resident charged with sexually assaulting five children in Genesee County has been ordered to undergo a forensic exam to determine if he is competent to stand trial and can be held criminally responsible for his actions.

Mark W. Latchana of Flint, Kevin Odette's court-appointed attorney, said he requested the psychiatric exam last week before 67th District Court judge John L. Conover.

The 33-year-old Clio man, who grew up in Gaylord, was charged Nov. 9 with 16 counts of sexually assaulting the five relatives in Genesee County.

Latchana said he decided to request the competency exam based on interviews he has had with his client.

"I will tell you what I said in court last week which is he (Odette) has been hearing voices inside his head and he cannot make them stop," Latchana said in a telephone interview Tuesday.

According to Latchana, his client had been hearing voices long before his Nov. 8 arrest. Since his arrest, Odette has been evaluated by a psychiatrist and a psychologist and has since been taking psychotropic medication.

Latchana said since his incarceration, Odette had been assaulted and beaten in jail and as a result has been placed in isolation. He is lodged in the Genesee County Jail on a \$1.6-million bond.

Genesee County prosecutor David Leyton said Tuesday Odette will undergo a competency exam at the Center for Forensic Psychiatry in Ypsilanti. He is scheduled for a forensic review in District Court Dec. 19 at 8:30 a.m.

"I would be surprised, though, if we are back in court before the end of January," Leyton said of the upcoming court date. "It's unlikely we will have his evaluation back by next month."

Leyton said the investigation by the sheriff's department is ongoing and his office has requested no additional warrant requests.

Capt. Chris Swanson with the Genesee County Sheriff's Department alleges Odette, who he described as a sexual predator, may have molested as many as 70 juveniles over the past two decades, including at least two boys in Gaylord when he was only 10 years old. According to Swanson, Odette's alleged victims in the 16 counts with which he's been charged are between the ages of 7 and 13.

Investigators said they have confirmed Odette sexually assaulted two boys at Waverly High School in Lansing. According to school records in Gaylord, Odette attended Gaylord High School from 1989 to 1991 as a freshman and sophomore.

A Nov. 13 press release of the Genesee County Sheriff's Department reported detectives had recovered a sexually explicit diary of Odette's dating back to 1996, as well as 75 VHS tapes and more than 200 DVDs from a Vienna Township (Genesee County) residence and storage unit. Some of these tapes and DVDs allegedly depicted Odette engaged in sexual activity with at least one of his victims.

According to Swanson, detectives seized the videos after receiving information Nov. 5 from a family member who had allegedly found several homemade DVDs depicting her son engaged in sexual activity with Odette.

Five felony warrants were issued in Genesee County and Odette was charged with 16 counts including: 6 counts of criminal sexual conduct (CSC) first-degree - victim under the age of 13; which carries a sentence of up to life in prison. He was also charged with four counts each of use of a computer to commit a crime; a 20-years to life felony, and child sexual abusive activity; a 20- year felony.

Odette was also charged with one count each of CSC second-degree - victim under the age of 13; a 15-year felony and attempted CSC first-degree - under the age of 13; a 10-year felony.

**Thursday, November 29th:**



Luke Gronneberg / H-P staff

**Erika Knuth (left), 8, and Becca Vroegop, 9, and other student council members fill gift bags Wednesday for Stewart Elementary School's We Care project. We Care bags go to Berrien County foster children who may not have a toothbrush or other personal belongings. We Care was started at Stewart Elementary by Kristi Lafrenz. Stewart is in the Lakeshore district.**





Thursday, November 29, 2007

## **Preschool programs face state fund cuts**

### **Late budget signing leaves operators scrambling to find money or shrink enrollments drastically.**

**Jennifer Mrozowski / The Detroit News**

About 150 school districts across Michigan are facing state funding losses for this year's School Readiness preschool programs, leaving systems like Lincoln Park scrambling to find additional money or drastically reduce their programs.

Due to the late signing of the state's 2007-08 budget, districts just recently learned their School Readiness funding amounts, according to Lindy Buch, director of the Office of Early Childhood Education and Family Services at the Michigan Department of Education.

While some districts received more money and have a greater number of preschool slots available, others lost slots -- like Lincoln Park, which dropped from 229 to 82.

Other districts that lost large numbers of slots include Taylor, Port Huron Area, Bay City and Cadillac Area. Big gainers include Lansing and Battle Creek.

The uncertainty surrounding the programs also has some families rushing to find new preschool programs or other child care options, Buch said.

"It's really a huge mess," she said. "And this is the worse it's ever been. People think the state budget doesn't matter but it really affects real families and real children and whether they are going to get to have a program or not."

Lincoln Park resident Brandy McCarthy, whose 4-year-old son, Austin, attends Lincoln Park's Crowley Pre-K Center, said school officials told her some students may not be able to continue to attend the program.

"We just found out Monday," McCarthy said. "It was a surprise to us."

Though the state allocated more money to the School Readiness Program -- \$80.9 million this year versus \$78.6 million last year -- more school districts and charter schools applied for the available funding, Buch said.

To distribute the funding, the state ranks districts based, in part, on their enrollment and the percentage of low-income students. Districts submit a funding request based on how many students are eligible, how many children the district can serve and other factors.

This year, districts statewide requested funding for more than 29,000 preschool slots, but the state had funding for just 23,794 slots, Buch said.

Though the Michigan Department of Education warned districts of the uncertainty of the state budget, many schools began to enroll students in the spring, as they have in past years, Buch said.

"The Legislature's delay in finalizing the 2008 budget has put many school districts, including Lincoln Park, in the tough position of changing their early childhood program midyear," said Leslee Fritz, communications director for communications director for the state's Budget Office.

"The governor pushed the Legislature all summer to come back to Lansing and finalize the state budget to provide certainty for school districts, cities and others, specifically to avoid this type of situation," Fritz said. Though some districts were surprised to lose slots, others requested fewer slots because of declining enrollment and other reasons.

Lincoln Park was especially impacted because some school systems, which were ranked higher because of their poverty and other factors, applied for more slots, Buch said.

Lincoln Park officials don't yet know whether they will be able to find other funding sources to cover the nearly \$500,000 in lost state aid.

If they can't find the money, options include closing the program or only serving the number of students for

which the state gave funding, said Superintendent Randall Kite.

"This was a complete shock to us and totally unfair," Kite said. "I don't understand the thinking at all." Kite said the district feels committed to the students and their parents and is exploring every option to continue the program. "But like any school district, we're experiencing funding problems," he said. *You can reach Jennifer Mrozowski at (313) 222-2269 or [jmrozowski@detnews.com](mailto:jmrozowski@detnews.com).*

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## Chimney rescue story flawed

November 29, 2007

BY BILL LAITNER

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

He did indeed make like Santa before getting stuck in a chimney.

As for the rest of an amusing story of a teen who missed his Thanksgiving Day curfew? Not true.

### Advertisement

Royal Oak police said last week the youth had gotten stuck while sneaking into the Judson Center for neglected children.

But the 17-year-old boy -- who has no living relatives -- had not missed curfew after all, an official with the Judson Center said Wednesday.

"He actually came back early" -- but to a locked building with nobody home, said Donna Ionas, vice president of development.

The youth was expected at 8 p.m., but when he returned more than an hour early after dining with a friend's family, Judson staff and other children were away, Ionas said.

Most were still at Thanksgiving dinners elsewhere, while some were with supervisors at a movie or picking up those who lacked transportation, she said.

"So he climbed on the roof," using a nearby tree, Ionas said.

Royal Oak firefighters had to yank him to safety at about 9 p.m. from the chimney of the one-story building, according to a police report.

The building is one of three, each housing up to a dozen children, at the campus on 13 Mile at Greenfield.

Ionas said she did not know the origin of the story that the youth was late, nor did she know why a Judson employee -- who refused to give his name when the Free Press called last week -- confirmed that version.

Contact **BILL LAITNER** at 248-351-3297.

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## No charges in sibling shooting

Thursday, November 29, 2007

**By Nate Reens**

**The Grand Rapids Press**

MARNE -- Ottawa County prosecutors will not pursue criminal charges against an 8-year-old boy who shot his younger sister this month or the children's grandfather who left the loaded handgun unsecured in his bedroom.

Stephen Larson, 54, a gun safety and firearms instructor, was surprised by the visit of his grandchildren, and the pair stumbled upon the weapon while playing, authorities said.

Zara Haight, 6, was shot once in the abdomen Nov. 18 when she and her brother, Jon, wandered into their grandparents' bedroom inside Larson's residence at 2036 Hayes St.

Jon, who is autistic, picked up the gun and fired, Prosecutor Ron Frantz said.

"Jon is clearly too young and limited to be criminally responsible for harming his sister," Frantz said Wednesday.

Zara remained hospitalized Wednesday in fair condition at Spectrum Health Butterworth Campus.

"While there is arguably some negligence on the part of Larson in failing to secure the gun, the circumstances of the surprise visit by the grandchildren and the location of the weapon in a bedroom not normally open to visitors makes it difficult to bring criminal charges," Frantz said.

Larson, who could not be reached for comment, told investigators he normally keeps the gun within his reach in the master bedroom.

He or his wife normally secure the weapon when the children come over, Larson told police.

On the day of the shooting, the grandfather was hunting and returned home to find his grandchildren there, authorities said.

The children's mother, Elizabeth Kizer, and grandmother, Deborah Larson, were at the residence when the shooting occurred. They did not hear the gunshot, Ottawa sheriff's Lt. Mark Bennett said.

The type of handgun used by the boy, and the fact that the Larsons' ranch-style home sprawls across the property, make it reasonable that the sound of the shot was not audible to them if they were on the other side of the house, as police believe.

"This continues to be a tragic event that, hopefully, will teach people they need to be extraordinarily careful with guns in their homes," Bennett said Wednesday. "Everyone involved was visibly upset and continues to be affected by this incident."

Larson is a member of the Great Lakes Shooting Sports Association and a chief instructor of firearms, according to the group's Web site. As an instructor, Larson is certified by the National Rifle Association.

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Article published Nov 29, 2007

Witness describes abuse

**Trace Christenson**

*The Enquirer*

Norreen Parker told a Calhoun County Circuit Court jury Wednesday about the highs and lows of her 18 months with Christopher Pratt.

For four hours Parker, 35, testified about their relationship, including their first date when Pratt came to the door dressed in hunting clothes smeared with rabbit blood. She also testified about the months when he "was a perfect gentleman" and they talked of marriage, and then about their last day together when she said he threw chairs at her and told her, "I have been cheating on you the whole time, you dumb bitch."

But then during cross examination, Parker acknowledged that she had called police 62 times and obtained restraining orders over the years against several boyfriends in what Pratt's attorney said was her attempt to control relationships and her practice of using the legal system to her benefit.

Parker was the first witness in the trial of Pratt, 39, charged with domestic violence, felonious assault, interfering with an electronic device causing injury and unlawful imprisonment during an incident in their Fredonia Township home on June 24. Parker alleged that during an argument Pratt struck her with a chair, hit her, broke their telephone and would not allow her to leave the house.

Pratt, 39, is a person of interest in the March 2004 disappearance of Mary Marshall Lands, according to the Marshall Police Department.

Pratt and Lands, 39, were engaged and living together in Marshall when she disappeared. Pratt told police she walked out of their townhouse after an argument.

Lands has not been seen since, but no arrests have been made in that case.

During mostly tearful testimony Wednesday before Circuit Judge Stephen Miller, Parker said she met Pratt because their sons were friends in school.

He invited her to dinner in March 2006 and she said when he opened the door he was wearing camouflage hunting clothes, which along with his hands, were spotted with blood.

"He said, 'boy, are you hot. Come here and give me a hug.'"

But Parker, questioned by Chief Assistant Prosecutor Daniel Buscher, said after his shower Pratt was a gentleman who came to her house nearly every day and was kind and caring to her and her three boys.

"He treated us like gold and he was always nice. He told me how special I was, and he was going to take care of me."

Three months later they moved in together and by May 2007, she said he was beginning to yell at her and sometimes become physically aggressive. He sometimes stayed away from the house all night and became controlling.

Parker said Pratt sometimes shoved her, grabbed her by the arms and violently shook her or grabbed her in a painful bear hug and lifted her off the ground.

Parker said she once found Viagra pills in Pratt's small briefcase and once received a phone call from a woman who said Pratt had impregnated her.

She told the jury Pratt sometimes forced her to have sex.

"I told him I was tired or I didn't feel good and he would still do it. One time he said the next day, 'Thanks for last night. I thought you were playing hard to get so I took it anyway.'"

Parker said she became afraid of Pratt and what he might do if she tried to leave.

"Once he said, see how far you can get before your spine is all over the back yard," Parker said. "Once he sat down next to me and asked if I have ever been zip stripped (tied with plastic bands) and left in the woods."

Parker said she was sometimes head butted and bitten on the nose.

On June 24, she testified she had been at the store and came home and picked up the cordless phone Pratt had been using, but he grabbed her arm and told her to give him the phone.

"You don't need to know who I was talking to," Parker said Pratt told her.

They began to argue and Parker said Pratt wrapped his arms around her in a bear hug and she screamed, telling him she was leaving.

She said Pratt threw two dining room chairs, hitting her in the legs with one, damaged the phone and wouldn't allow her to leave the house for several minutes.

But Parker called to her son, Tristand Parker, 11, to go to the neighbors' home and call police.

The boy testified he saw Pratt holding a chair above his head and throwing it and then grabbing his mother before he left in his truck.

During cross examination, Parker told Defense Attorney J. Thomas Schaeffer that she had obtained personal protection orders against other boyfriends and called police dozens of times during past relationships.

"I was a bad judge of character when it came to dating, I admit that," Parker said.

But she told Schaeffer she didn't accuse Pratt of seeing other women the day of their final fight and denied she hit or threw anything at him.

She said she tried never to upset Pratt.

"I tried to appease him and keep the peace," she said. "I didn't have anyplace to go. He wouldn't leave and I was stuck."

Trooper Richard Pazder told the jury he spoke to Pratt after his arrest that day, and he admitted throwing the chair and breaking items in the house but denied he assaulted Parker.

"He said he would never do anything to hurt her," Pazder said.

*Trace Christenson can be reached at 966-0685 or [tchrist@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:tchrist@battlecr.gannett.com).*

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## Medical program reopens

Thursday, November 29, 2007

By Kristin Longley

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After more than a year of cutbacks and uncertainty, the state will reopen its cash-assistance program for vulnerable adults with medical needs.

The Department of Human Services will begin accepting applications as soon as Saturday. Those who filed applications within the past year must refile.

Adults 21 and older who do not have children are eligible for the program, which provides cash assistance for medical services such as doctor's visits, prescriptions, some medical tests and limited hospitalizations. It is not Medicaid.

"This is very good news for the customers in Jackson," said Debra Cole, program manager. "It doesn't cover everything, but at least it's something."

The cash-strapped state froze the program in October 2006 because it had reached its statewide cap for recipients. In Jackson County, more than 800 adults received assistance that month.

Since the program stopped accepting new applicants, the number of recipients has more than cut in half, with 353 adults served in October of this year.

Eligible adults can go to the local DHS office to fill out the application. The department will follow up with an in-person interview. Applicants will be asked questions regarding their income and assets.

"We want to get the word out that this can be of service," said Tanda Reynolds, county DHS office director.

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## Holland Free Health Clinic helps uninsured

Thursday, November 29, 2007

By Jennifer Jacobs

The Grand Rapids Press

HOLLAND -- When Kay Postma lost her job, health insurance, apartment and car within several months of each other, she wasn't sure what the future held.

Without insurance, she worried about paying for doctor's appointments and medication.

Thanks to the Holland Free Health Clinic, Postma has been able to get her medication free for the past three years. She also got an eye exam, new pair of glasses and needed dental work -- all at no charge.

"I have no health coverage and that's scary," Postma said.

To help raise money for its efforts, the Holland Free Health Clinic has a benefit Festival of Giving from Saturday to Dec. 6 at the former Halloween USA store in the Holland Town Center in Holland Township .

Postma, 60, works part time helping an elderly person with house cleaning and other chores.

She worked at Sligh Furniture and Clocks for 18 years before being let go when the company shut its doors.

Without the clinic's help, she isn't certain what she'd do, she said. "I'm very thankful for them."

Jeff Compagner, clinic director, said the clinic has added eye, dental and diabetic care to its offerings this year.

Officials said hopes are to offer an urgent-care facility.

"There are numerous programs for individuals that live below poverty level with no insurance that can access free prescriptions," Compagner said. "But it's an extremely complex process."

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## State graded on AIDS work

Marks include A's through D's

November 29, 2007

BY RUBY L. BAILEY

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Michigan is doing a good job of both decreasing HIV infections among drug users who inject and reducing transmission of the virus from pregnant women to their babies. However, the state is performing poorly at curbing the infection rate in young African Americans, according to its first report card on HIV/AIDS.

The report card, to be released today by the Michigan AIDS Fund, is the organization's first attempt to grade the quality of care and treatment of those with HIV/AIDS as well as funding, prevention and public policy in the state.

### Advertisement

The quality of care and treatment in the state earned a B- along with funding, while the HIV prevention efforts and public policy efforts both earned a C.

"We have some wonderful things that have been victories," said Stacey Barbas, executive director of the Michigan AIDS Fund, a Southfield-based nonprofit organization that funds HIV prevention programs. "We still have so many things that have to be done. We're worried that the message isn't clear that it's still a crisis out there."

The fund hopes to raise HIV/AIDS awareness as World AIDS Day approaches Saturday.

The organization used the 2005 Annual Review of HIV Trends in Michigan, compiled by the state Department of Community Health, to produce the grades.

Among the HIV prevention high marks were an A for limiting the transmission of HIV/AIDS from pregnant women to their babies and an A- for reducing the infection rates among drug users who inject.

The HIV transmission rate dropped to 8% in 2005 from 11% in 2001 among those drug users, according to data supplied by the Department of Community Health. The reduction is attributed in part to five privately funded needle exchange programs in the state.

A state law mandating HIV tests for pregnant women helped reduce the number of babies born with the HIV/AIDS since the 1990s. In 1992, 65 HIV-infected mothers gave birth to 17 children who tested HIV-positive. In 2006, one of 45 children born to HIV-infected mothers tested positive for the virus, according to the state health department.

The law requires the test at a pregnant woman's first medical appointment unless the woman refuses or a doctor deems it medically inadvisable. Early detection allows doctors to begin drug therapy that cuts the rate of HIV transmission to 2%, experts said. One of four babies born to HIV-infected mothers will be infected if no treatment is received.

"We've worked very diligently," said Debra Szejda, acting director of the health department's Division of Health, Wellness and Disease Control. "And we've done a lot of education."

The state received its lowest grade -- a D -- because HIV testing isn't widely offered with routine health screenings. The

<http://www.printthis.clickability.com/pt/cpt?action=cpt&title=State+graded+on+AIDS+work&expire=&...> 11/29/2007

state also received a D in prevention efforts aimed at African Americans and residents ages 13-24.

The numbers of HIV diagnoses increased among that age group to 16% in 2005, up from 12% in 2001, according to the state's data. About 75% of the teen and young adult diagnoses in the last five years have been among African Americans, Barbas said.

One positive change on the prevention front: The state this year received a \$1-million grant from the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to expand HIV testing in health care facilities targeting African Americans in metro Detroit. The program is expected to start in January, Szejda said.

Increased funding for prevention programs is needed to lower the transmission rate in those group, said Rosalind Andrews-Worthy, head of Gospel Against AIDS, a statewide faith-based HIV/AIDS awareness and prevention program targeting African-American and Hispanic churches.

Federal funding for prevention has dropped by about \$300,000 since 2003, to about \$6 million, Szejda said.

Andrews-Worthy said the state "has been doing a wonderful job with the resources at hand, but those resources are limited."

"There's less and less money on a federal level for preventative education," she said. "Once folks know better, they tend to do better."

Contact **RUBY L. BAILEY** at 313-222-6651 or [rbailey@freepress.com](mailto:rbailey@freepress.com).

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## Agencies promote free HIV testing for World AIDS Day

Thursday, November 29, 2007

JILL ARMENTROUT

THE SAGINAW NEWS

The Saginaw County Department of Public Health and the Hearth Home in Saginaw are distributing red ribbons and free condoms and offering free HIV testing this week in honor of World AIDS Day on Saturday.

Nationally, experts estimate that 1.4 million people are living with the human immunodeficiency virus or HIV, the virus that causes AIDS, with one-quarter unaware of their infection.

Federal Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data estimate that 200 people in Saginaw County are living with HIV, 68 of them with an AIDS diagnosis.

As of July 1, a total of 12,982 people were living with HIV/AIDS in Michigan, more than half with a diagnosis of AIDS, the state Department of Community Health reports.

Further breakdown of data shows that 59 percent of those infected are black, 36 percent are white, 4 percent are Hispanic and 1 percent are other or of unknown race.

Almost 77 percent of those infected are males. Adolescents and young adult diagnoses have increased for the second consecutive year, with three-quarters of them black.

Members of the Greater Williams Temple Church of God in Christ, 608 E. Remington in Saginaw, made red ribbons to distribute through the health department and at the church.

The Saginaw Community HIV/AIDS Task Force formed in April to work on meeting gaps in services and meets monthly. The mission of the group is to eliminate new cases of HIV and to improve the health of those already infected in Saginaw County.

Free HIV testing is available at the Hearth Home, 732 Hoyt. Call 753-9011 for information. Walk-ins are welcome.

Call the health department at 758-3880 for information about free testing.

The Central Michigan District Health Department, 2012 E. Preston in Mount Pleasant, and the Isabella County AIDS Council are promoting free HIV testing clinics with ads on city buses. The health department also is distributing free condoms during the first two weeks of December, along with education materials and red ribbons this week. v

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## Food Bank sets higher goal for holiday

**FLINT**

**THE FLINT JOURNAL FIRST EDITION**

Thursday, November 29, 2007

**By Holly Klaft**

**hklaft@flintjournal.com • 810.766.6249**

FLINT - The Food Bank of Eastern Michigan continues to set the bar higher for its fundraising efforts.

The Flint-based agency announced during a news conference Wednesday its goal to raise \$662,000 during its Face of Hunger holiday campaign.

The goal is \$30,000 higher than the amount raised during last year's fundraiser.

Food bank President Bill Kerr acknowledged that tough economic times might limit the dollars residents can donate, but said he's confident the community will help meet the growing need.

"We've seen the hardships around us, but the community has continued to step forward," Kerr said.

The food bank has met or exceeded its fundraising goals every year since the campaign began in 1996, raising a total of about \$3.5 million.

Collection envelopes will be distributed in The Flint Journal on Friday; donations can be made anytime at [www.fbem.org/support.htm](http://www.fbem.org/support.htm).

Kerr also plans to break distribution records this year by putting nearly 19 million pounds of food on the tables of needy families - more than three times the amount distributed just over a decade ago.

"It's a great thing that we can do it and it's a sad thing that we have to," Kerr said. "This has been a tough year for the food bank and for me to see the need grow so much."

The boosted fundraising goal and distribution efforts are needed to help keep food on shelves of pantries strained by the growing number of hungry residents, said Booker Johnson, a volunteer at the North Central Church of Christ pantry in Flint.

"In the last couple of months the amount of people coming in has doubled," said Johnson, who was one of dozens of pantry volunteers to attend the campaign kick-off to show support for the food bank. "It's rough."

The State Bank President Dennis Leyder said he's even noticed the effects Michigan's struggling economy and high unemployment rates have had on the community.

"We see the need," Leyder said. "We see what this economy has done to families."

Leyder said the bank plans to raise \$1 million worth of food through the food bank in coming years.

"It's sad to say we need to raise that but it's good to say we have the resources to meet the needs," he said.

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Article published Nov 29, 2007

## **Salvation Army seeks more food donations**

The Salvation Army is in need of nonperishable food items to fill its Christmas food baskets.

Food supplies are very low at this time.

Last year, the Salvation Army and Spirit of Christmas committee assisted 960 families at Christmas. It is expected that when applications end this Friday, there will be nearly 1,100 families applying for assistance.

Food collected will be used in baskets that are scheduled to be distributed Dec. 21. The amount of food given away is determined by the size of the family.

Food can be dropped off at 815 E. First St.

For more information, contact the Salvation Army at 241-0440.

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# The County Press

## Tough times drive demand for food

by KATHLEEN STEFFEN  
contributing writer

Heaven Sent Community Ministries may be based in Marlette but plenty of people go there for help.

Gena Titus, who runs the food pantry, said Heaven Sent typically serves 250-300 people per month, and about 25% of those are from Brown City.

Heaven Sent was originally intended to serve just people in the Marlette school district, a vast area that stretches from Clifford to Kingston to Hemans and over to Germania Road toward Sandusky. Turning away people from Brown City who needed food for their families wasn't something Titus could do.

"We cannot stop feeding Brown City people and turn them away, and I don't have a place to send them," she said. "I just started crying one time É I'm not going to tell them no so we started feeding them and have since."

The food pantry started in the basement of the First United Methodist Church in Marlette but moved to its own building at 3065 Main St. because so many people needed help. Titus said they didn't want clients standing outside in bad weather waiting for food.

Although Heaven Sent Community Ministries had it's initial home at the First United Methodist Church, Titus said all Marlette churches send donations and refer clients.

There also is a clothing store at the new building. There have been so many donations of clothing that Heaven Sent is running a \$2 a bag sale and \$4 for a winter coat. There is gently used clothing for men, women, children and babies. All sizes are available and everyone is encouraged to come shop.

The cost of providing food for all of those in need remains a great concern for Titus. She said it costs \$1,000 a month to feed all of those who need help. That breaks down to about \$43 per person. Heaven Sent gives out food on the third Thursday of every month.

In addition, Titus said they give out 7-10 emergency food boxes every month. There also are people they hear about who need help but won't ask. For those people, Heaven Sent reaches out by putting together food boxes to leave on their porches or in their car.

While food donations are helpful, Titus said monetary donations work best. She for every dollar donated, Heaven Sent can buy \$14 worth of food from the Eastern Michigan Food Bank in Flint.

Through there, Titus said they are able to plan meals for their clients. Clients



get big boxes of food filled with enough for three days worth of meals based on family size.

Titus said as an example they try to provide everything from cereal and oatmeal, bacon, granola bars, and juice for breakfast. Typical lunch items might include stews and soups, hot dogs, peanut butter and jelly, and bread. At dinner, they may get ground turkey or beef, kielbasa, pasta, and vegetables. At Christmas, they will provide turkeys. She said they make fruit and vegetables a staple in the boxes. Meals also include desserts.

Heaven Sent also provides laundry soap and personal items which are not covered by food stamps.

First-time clients get a Bible and list of area churches. The boxes also include daily devotional books donated by local churches.

Titus said the need extends past food. She said clients need help with water and electric bills, too.

The hard economic times have only served to increase the need in the area, Titus said. "I thought we were about topped out, but last month 39 new ones—eight of those seniors over 69. Most of the seniors don't have anyone else," she said. "It's just so sad; it's increasing every month."

If interested to make a donation to Heaven Sent Community Ministries, call (989) 635-0077 or send a check to Heaven Sent, P.O. Box 384, Marlette, MI 48453.

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## Warren group needs donations

### Shelves nearly bare at Goodfellows' pantry

By Norb Franz  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

Despite shoppers flocking to stores to take advantage of early holiday shopping deals, Darrel Nieporte knows firsthand that for far too many people, the season won't be merry.

Nieporte, who heads the Warren Goodfellows, looks at the empty freezer and mostly bare shelves inside the group's pantry as proof that times are tough in the area.

"Worst ever," said Nieporte, 69, who joined the service club in 1965.

Michigan's ailing economy is a double whammy for an organization like the Goodfellows. Demand for food, and toys as part of the Goodfellows' No Child without a Christmas campaign, is up. But donations are down.

Approximately three weeks ago, the food bank stocked by the group next to the Warren Community Center ran out of canned meats and dry goods. On Wednesday, a few cases of canned vegetables, fruits and tomato sauce remained -- not enough to provide balanced meals to needy individuals and families.

Never has the supply been so low, the Goodfellows say.

Cases of food provided by approximately 20 schools conducting food drives will all arrive in the next couple of weeks. The Goodfellows will receive those items with open arms. Nieporte said that will get them through the holidays, but he's looking beyond.

The Warren group, which also serves Sterling Heights and Center Line, is the only Goodfellows organization in Michigan that runs a food bank year-round.

With the current supply nearly depleted and food drives held primarily in late autumn to build the stock for the following year, Nieporte worries the shelves might be completely bare before mid-2008.

"I know the food's coming in, but keep in mind we serve all year long," he said.

And he doubts the Goodfellows will have an adequate variety and quantity of toys and clothing for gift packages (that include food) and are supposed to be available for the needy starting Dec. 18.

So the group is making a desperate plea to the community for donations.

The greatest need is for cash -- contributions are tax deductible -- because it allows members to purchase food at reduced prices and buy gift certificates for food, clothes and toiletries.

This year, cash donations are down 30 percent from 2006, when contributions were down 42 percent from the year before.

"It's a killer," Nieporte said.

Standing among empty shelves, Gino Grassi, a member of the Warren Goodfellows for 11 years, said current supplies are troubling.

"Right now, we're hurting," he said. "We've never been down this bad."

Last year, the food bank assisted 7,500 people.

Unable to currently provide complete meals from those seeking a helping hand is heartbreaking.

"That's the hard part," Nieporte said. "It's not good to see the looks on their faces. It's horrible."

Warren city government will lend a hand by providing boxes for food and toy donations at the Warren City Hall atrium, Warren Mayor James Fouts' office, the Owen Jax Recreation Center and the Warren Community Center. Fouts' staff also will set up a "giving tree" where donors can place hats, gloves, scarves and socks.

The Goodfellows this Friday will kick off their annual newspaper sale at various spots around town, and at the Warren Christmas tree lighting ceremony this Saturday at city hall. Sales will continue on subsequent weekends.

The volunteer service club also needs people who drive pickups or other trucks to haul items from school canned food drives to the Goodfellows' facility inside the Warren Parks and Recreation transportation garage.

To donate to the Warren Goodfellows, call (586) 979-4313 or (586) 531-2147.

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Article published Nov 29, 2007  
Are home heating costs leaving you in the cold?  
By NICOLE GERRING  
Times Herald

As cold temperatures arrive, many area homeowners are turning up their thermostats.

But that practice is a luxury for those who cannot afford to heat their home at a comfortable temperature.

Federal funding for low-income home heating assistance decreased between 2006 and 2007 and will decrease again in 2008. Volatile world oil markets are driving up the cost of home heating oil, while an increased demand for natural gas may increase the price of that fuel, according to the U.S. Energy Information Administration.

Are you feeling the pinch of home heating costs? Are you worried about how you and your family will pay your utility bills this year?

Let us know for a Saturday story. Please call Nicole Gerring at (810) 989-6270 or email her at [ngerring@gannett.com](mailto:ngerring@gannett.com).

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## Detroit panhandler sues KFC over scalding

Midday update

Ben Schmitt  
Detroit Free Press

A homeless man sued a Kentucky Fried Chicken manager today alleging she threw boiling water on him as he panhandled in front of the Highland Park restaurant on Woodward.

Bill Zimmerman, 50, a Navy veteran of the Vietnam War who says he lives in an abandoned Detroit home, filed the lawsuit through his attorney Mark Bernstein today in Wayne County Circuit Court.

He alleges that KFC Manager Kimberly Mallory tossed a pail of boiling water on him as he crouched at a side door asking people for money.

The lawsuit also names KFC parent company Yum! Brands Inc, of Louisville, Ky., and franchisee Kazi Foods of Michigan Inc. as defendants.

"I never seen it coming," Zimmerman said today. "I just felt the pain."

Bernstein, a Farmington Hills attorney, said Zimmerman spent 13 days in a burn unit at Detroit Medical Center for injuries to his face, back and legs.

"It's unbelievable," Bernstein said. "We don't live in the Middle Ages, but apparently KFC has a different point of view."

Mallory, who still works at the restaurant, could not be reached for comment this morning. A police report was filed but no one was ever charged, Bernstein said.

Contact Ben Schmitt at (313) 223-4296 or [bcschmitt@freepress.com](mailto:bcschmitt@freepress.com).

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**Print This Story**

# The Daily Telegram

**Print Page****THURSDAY NOVEMBER 29, 2007** Last modified: *Wednesday, November 28, 2007 4:17 PM EST*

## Charities feel the economic crunch

The need reported by many Michigan charities is increasing as fast or faster than the donations they receive, according to GuideStar, a national firm that researches nonprofit organizations.

By [Phil Johnson](#)

Daily Telegram Staff Writer

**ADRIAN** — Michigan's struggling economy is stretching some local charities thin as the holiday season approaches.

Associated Charities of Lenawee County distributed 872 Christmas baskets last year, according to executive director Eloise Hosken. Those packages consisted of 9,376 toys, mittens and books.

"I'm sure that number will be much higher," Hosken said of this year's predicted required items.

Hosken said her organization has already received more than 900 requests for Christmas baskets this year and has planned for more than 950. Requests for Christmas baskets can still be made through Friday at Associated Charities.

Lenawee County charities are experiencing what is part of a larger trend across the state and even the nation.

The need reported by many Michigan charities is increasing as fast or faster than the donations they receive, according to GuideStar, a national firm that researches nonprofit organizations.

Sixty-nine percent of the 136 Michigan charities responding to a GuideStar survey last month reported an increased demand for their services this year. Demand decreased at only

3 percent of agencies and stayed about the same at the others.

Contributions increased at 52 percent of the charities, decreased at

22 percent and stayed about the same at the others.

The trends in Michigan mirror those in many other states, according to the GuideStar survey, though it's a bit worse than the national average. The state has been saddled with the nation's highest unemployment rate for much of 2007.

Perhaps one of the hardest hit local charities has been The Daily Bread of Lenawee soup kitchen. Executive director Kathy Poisson-DeWitt estimates the kitchen is giving out twice as many meals now as it did during this time last year. She said during October alone her facility served 6,630 meals.



**CHARITY CRUNCH:** Brandi Osborne, a supervisor at Associated Charities, sorts through Christmas decorations that will be given away at the Lenawee County organization beginning Monday. — Telegram photo by [Lad Strayer](#)



“That’s astronomical,” Poisson-DeWitt said. “That’s more than we’ve ever done.” She said it’s a rare day when the kitchen serves fewer than 200 people.

Poisson-DeWitt said she is also beginning to see an increase of middle class and working poor who are struggling to make ends meet. The influx of meal-seekers is beginning to stretch the organization thin.

“We have to do something,” Poisson-DeWitt said. “If we don’t get some major grant money, we won’t last the winter.”

Kathleen Schanz, executive director of Lenawee United Way, agreed that the increasing pool of economically disadvantaged people is creating more demand for charitable services.

“As a result our work continues to grow,” Schanz said. “We don’t have to look very far.”

“We’re running pretty close to where we were last year at this time,” she said. “We’re all feeling it. We’re all trying to support one another in ailing Michigan.”

But as demand skyrockets, some say their supplies are dwindling.

“When people are not working they can’t contribute,” Hosken said.

Both Hosken and Poisson-DeWitt said contributions at their facilities have dropped from last year.

“All we can do is continue on,” Poisson-DeWitt said, “and we will.”

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

**-- CLOSE WINDOW--**

## Pinched at the kettles



News Photo by Patty Ramus

**Barbara Sommerfield of Alpena rings a bell for the Salvation Army's Red Kettle Campaign Wednesday afternoon at Save-A-Lot. Salvation Army officials are reporting donations are down from the previous year.**

By PATTY RAMUS

The Salvation Army of Alpena County is feeling the money pinch as other area organizations have in recent months.

Salvation Army officials said donations are down from the previous year in this year's Red Kettle Campaign. Last year the campaign had raised 37 percent of its goal by this time and this year 24 percent of its goal has been raised. The campaign began Nov. 9 and ends Dec. 24.

"We are at this point in time, \$13,000 behind where we were last year at this point in time," said Capt. Jason Schaal.

This year the Salvation Army has a goal to raise \$160,000. Last year's goal was \$150,000 and about \$149,000 was raised. This year's goal was raised because the Salvation Army brought on the Call Us For Help program, Schaal said.

Schaal said donations are down due to the declining economy and increase in job losses.

"A lot of people that would otherwise give can't give," he said. "They're finding themselves in positions where they need help."

The money raised at the Salvation Army Store and proceeds from the campaign are used to fund activities such as providing assistance to law enforcement and firefighters serving during emergency situations, Project Connect, Angel Tree Program and League of Mercy, Schaal said.

"I do view this year as a more critical year to meet our goals just because it seems there are so many people in need. The more that we can raise the more we can help folks," he said.

Schaal said the Salvation Army is always looking for more people to volunteer to be bell ringers. Bell ringers can be found at the Alpena Mall, JCPenney, Big Lots, Kmart, Neiman's Family Market, Save-A-Lot, Perch's IGA, Walgreens, Wal-Mart and the post office.

"We ask for a couple of hours minimum. They can ring from a couple hours to full shift which is six hours or more," he said.

Schaal said those who are interested in volunteering can call him at 766-3224.

Patty Ramus can be reached via e-mail at [pramus@thealpenanews.com](mailto:pramus@thealpenanews.com) or by phone at 358-5687.

**Sterling Hgts. police take kids holiday shopping**

November 29, 2007

By ESE ESAN

FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

Children and police will be out in full force Dec. 8 for the 10th annual Sterling Heights' Shop with a Cop event.

The benefit for needy children and their families is sponsored by the Sterling Heights Fraternal Order of Police Lodge 118, the Sterling Heights Police Department and Wal-Mart of Sterling Heights.

**Advertisement**

About 50 children will shop for Christmas gifts with uniformed Sterling Heights police officers beginning at 8:30 a.m. at the Wal-Mart located at 44575 Mound at M-59 in Sterling Heights. Each child will have \$100.

“This program assists in bringing the community and police department closer together, along with providing these kids with some extra cheer during the Christmas season,” said Sgt. Randy DePriest, organizer of the event, in a news release.

For more information or to donate money toward Shop with a Cop, call DePriest at 586-446-2923.

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#### **SEIU raises**

Here are the scheduled pay raises in tentative agreements reached between the state and a union representing 5,000 state workers:

- Oct. 1, 2008: None
- Oct. 1, 2009: 1 percent
- Oct. 1, 2010: 3 percent

Source: State union officials

## **State workers' union approves new contract**

5,000 employees covered by SEIU ratify agreement

Chris Andrews  
Lansing State Journal

A union representing 5,000 state government workers approved a new three-year contract Wednesday.

Three Service Employees International Union Local 517M units overwhelmingly OK'd the pacts, 1,383 to 279.

The agreement calls for no raise in October 2008, a 1 percent raise in October 2009 and 3 percent raise in October 2010.

The agreement also requires members to pay more of their health care costs.

SEIU Local 517 executive vice president Phil Thompson said the new contract was fair to both sides.

"State employees have a strong sensitivity to the state budget issues going on, and I think they are also taxpayers, too," Thompson said. "Frankly, I think they want to focus on quality services, and I'm sure they are very glad to have a ratified agreement for the next three years."

The union represents unemployment insurance case workers, scientists and engineers, and technical support staff for the scientists and engineers.

Liz Boyd, spokeswoman for Gov. Jennifer Granholm, declined comment until all the unions representing state workers have completed their ratification votes.

UAW Local 6000, the Michigan Corrections Organization and AFSCME Council 25 all have tentative agreements pending ratification votes.

Contact Chris Andrews at 377-1054 or [candrews@lsj.com](mailto:candrews@lsj.com).

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